

MAY 1932

RECKLESS RALPH'S

# DIME NOVEL ROUND-UP

OFFICIAL ORGAN HAPPY HOURS BROTHERHOOD

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The original of this issue carried a front-page illustration of the cover of The Black Avenger-A Story of the Spanish Main, by Ned Buntline, on which was a woodcut depicting "The Terrible Encounter on Board the Spanish Frigate.", with the following notation:

"Here is the front cover of Ned Buntline's 'Black Avenger' as put out in paper-covered book form in 1859. Four times as big as Beadle's dime book, being 9 & 3/8 by 12 & 5/8 inches, and consisting of four issues of Ballou's Weekly Novelette, each sixteen pages, selling at four cents a copy at all the periodical depots. Then a special cover was printed on blue-green paper and the four issues bound and sold for sixteen cents, as a complete novel. Each of the separate weekly issues contained an installment of the story and some miscellany.

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## THE DIME NOVEL

Its place in American Literature

By Ralph F. Adimaro

### II

THE PRE DIME NOVEL ERA (1830-1860)

Third Section.

BALLOU, THE FATHER OF THE DIME NOVEL

Long before Erastus Beadle appeared on the scene in 1860 to publish his famous series of dime paper books, others had already experimented with dime literature.. Wilson and Company, publishers of Brother Johnathan, the first story paper (1839) had issued paper  
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(Reprint)



books for ten cents in 1840, which were imitated by several others. We shall look into these incipient attempts in the next article.

While the Dime Novel got its name from Beadle's series, it is preposterous to assert that he should get the credit due somebody else. Beadle not only did not originate the Dime Novel, but the very foundation upon which he built up his business-American stories with Wild West scenes-, he grafted bodily from a predecessor. This remarkable literary light was a Bostonian, Maturin Murray Ballou. From this New Englander, Beadle got most of his ideas about publishing only American novels at cheap prices, at the same time taking away some of Ballou's best writers including Edward S. Ellis-Ned Buntline-J.H. Robinson-and A.J.H. Duganne. Ballou issued a sensational series of tales, mostly Wild West stories as far back as 1850 for twenty-five cents each, size 6x9 & 3/4 inches, and this gave Beadle the idea to issue a similar series but at a more nominal price-ten cents. So the Dime Novel actually came to us from an unusual place-Boston! Boston, the home of all un-American! What irony !

Maturin Murray Ballou was not only an editor, publisher, and playwright, but he was a writer, traveler, builder, journalist, and did one or two other tasks to round out a useful and brilliant career. To Ballou, also, goes the credit of being the father of popular American literature. His BALLOU'S DOLLAR MAGAZINE (1855) was the first all-fiction monthly ever published in America. It preceded by at least forty years, the wood-pulp magazines that clutter up the news-stands of today. Under his guiding genius, the first illustrated weekly, GLEASON'S PICTORIAL DRAWING ROOM COMPANION, later, when he took



complete charge, changed to BALLOU'S PICTORIAL, was issued in 1851. A short review of his life might not be amiss.

Ballou was born in Boston in 1820, the youngest child of Hosea Ballou, a leading minister of New England. Different branches of the family had published religious magazines and sermons, so that the name of Ballou became prominent in religious circles.

Hosea Ballou, with the aid of two older sons ran a religious paper which gave the young hopeful, Maturin, many ideas about printing. These he was to put to good use in enterprises, a decade later. Young Ballou went to Harvard, but never graduated due to ill health from which he suffered all his life. He went around the world inspecting the lands, about which he wrote many romantic tales under his pseudonym, Lieutenant Murray. Next, we find him installed as a custom clerk in Boston, surely a most prosaic place for such an adventurous youngster. He was then about 24. During this brief hiatus in his busy life, he may have outlined in his mind, the tremendous literary work he later accomplished. While he worked at his sinecure in the Custom House, he wrote for OLIVE BRANCH, a paper published in his home town, Boston. He had started writing editorials for this paper at eighteen. Here he came to the attention of Frederick Gleason, publisher of FLAG OF OUR UNION, the most important story paper of the period, and about 1847 of 1848, Ballou became its editor. FLAG OF OUR UNION was the forerunner of NEW YORK LEDGER, NEW YORK WEEKLY, and Beadle's SATURDAY STAR JOURNAL. These latter, when Ballou declined, took over all his authors. FLAG OF OUR UNION was of the mammoth size. It was a sheet of four pages the size of a medium-built man with arms outstretched.



Enough paper to cover a double bed! Though this story paper was one of the most important (it appeared in 1848) of the period, it was not the first. BROTHER JOHNATHAN, edited by Rufus Mott Griswold, also a mammoth size, was the first real paper, appearing in 1839. In its inception, The SATURDAY EVENING POST, established in 1821, would be given the palm, were it not for the fact that in its early years, it was more or less a literary paper. It bore little resemblance to the POST of the 1850's and 1860's.

In one thing, Ballou differed from the other editors of mammoth sheets--he did not lampoon everything in sight. Instead of that, he steered his FLAG along all-fiction lines, and within a few years, had gathered to himself, the most formidable group of popular writers ever assembled under one banner in America. He coaxed his writers; he got out of them, all they could give. This was unique for those days. For every editor, so jealous of his rival, did nothing but rant and rave. Another first that we must credit to Ballou was that he gave more than one nom-de-plume to a given author. This author was Sylvanus Cobb, Jr., who joined the staff in 1850. By 1857, after launching forth the PICTORIAL and DOLLAR MONTHLY, Ballou had on his staff, the following sensational authors: A. J. H. Duganne- J. H. Ingraham- J. H. Robinson- E. C. Z. Judson, (Ned Buntline)- H. W. HERBERT (Frank Forester)- Harry Hazleton- and Edward S. Ellis. In 1853, the first efforts of Horatio Alger, Jr., were published in the PICTORIAL \*. In this remarkable collection were many famous authors of the more restrained type, such as the two Carey sisters- Mrs. Ann S. Stephens- Park Benjamin- Mrs. L. H. Sigourney- Rev. F. W. Holland- and T. S. Arthur, who inflicted us with that midsummer's nightmare, "Ten Nights in a



Barroom." In the PICTORIAL was published T.Bullfinch's "Fables from Antiquity".still used in our schools.

In November,1854,after Frederick Gleason, the owner of the two papers,had returned from a trip to Europe,he sold outright to Ballou,the entire publishing plant.Gleason had done very little to advance the firm, except,perhaps,to smoke cigars visorously.He seems to have been a sort of modern vice-president. Unhindered by entangling alliances Ballou's papers became the most important of their kind in the United States. The next year,he launched BALLOU'S DOLLAR MONTHLY.It was a quarto affair of 100 pages,and was advertised as the "Cheapest Magazine in the World". It contained short stories-an article or two-some illustrations-and editorial comment. Soon the firm grew so that Ballou erected a new building of four stories to house all his enterprises. At this time, (1857) the DOLLAR MONTHLY circulated over 100,000; the PICTORIAL reached nearly 140,000 and FLAG OF OUR UNION had a circulation of 75,000 weekly. Thus,in ten years,starting in 1847,Ballou had achieved the impossible.He had literally crushed forever,all foreign competition and had established on a paying basis,American magazines containing only American authors. (To be continued)

\*(In Herbert Mayes' sympathetic biography of Alger,there is no mention made of the first contributions of Alger,to Ballou's Pictorial and Dollar Monthly. This is an important omission,as it links the most popu- writer of boy stories,with the greatest editor of popular literature in the nineteenth century-Ballou. It was the latter who encouraged Alger almost ten years before Oliver Optic took him under his wing.

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THE GOLDEN AGE OF ENGLISH BOYS LITERATURE  
 A Bibliographical Review of Twenty Years  
 Progress..1862-1882.  
 Edited by WM.J. BENNERS.  
 (4th & Last Installment)

On Jan.18,1879,the first number of the BOYS OWN PAPER appeared,produced under the auspices of the Religious Tract Society,and conducted by Dr.Macaulay,of LEISURE HOUR.It was soon followed by its now popular contemporary,the BOYS WORLD, which, under the careful supervision of Ralph Rollington,(who,we may mention,is also editor of two other journals), rapidly rose in favor under the motto of "Overcome Evil with Good". It has steadily fought its way,inspiring boys with a wish for superior fiction,amusement,and instruction,which had been so long out of their reach. The weekly circulation now exceeds 50,000 (1882).

OUR BOYS PAPER,its companion journal,edited by Ralph Rollington,is floating high on the tide of success. It was started in October,1880.

A "split in the camp" of the BOYS OWN PAPER led,at the close of its first volume,to the establishment by the late W.H.G. Kingston,of the UNION JACK,which soon attained a fair mood of popularity. It has, since its proprietor's death,been edited by Mr.G. A.Henty,a favorite boys writer.

And here we leave the record of onward and upward progress which has led to such good results,closing with a casual reference to the BOYS NEWSPAPER,produced by Messrs. Cassell,Petter and Gilpin,and after the thirteenth number,sold to the proprietors of the ILLUSTRATED NEWS,who converted it into an illustrated journal,and who had,only a few weeks before,commenced to publish the



BOYS ILLUSTRATED NEWS, conducted by the over popular Capt. Mayne Reid.

We append, for the benefit of the curious in such matters, a brief list of the efforts made previous to the commencement of the twenty year period of which we have given a brief review.

The earliest attempt at supplying special literature for English boys, appears to have been, the YOUTH'S INSTRUCTOR, which, starting so far back as the reign of George III, 1817, published successively no less than thirty-nine volumes, the last appearing in 1855.

Next was the YOUTH'S MISCELLANY, or, MONTHLY VISITOR, which commenced in 1823, ran only as far as the third volume. Then came the YOUNG MAN'S COMPANION, or YOUTH'S INSTRUCTOR, also a monthly magazine.

In 1832, appeared the BOYS & GIRLS PENNY MAGAZINE, the first boys book published at what is now the recognized price, but of which our information is very scant, only three odd numbers being in the British Museum.

In 1853, the YOUNG MAN'S MONTHLY MAGAZINE appeared, but only completed one volume. The next was the BOYS OWN JOURNAL AND YOUTH'S MISCELLANY, which first came out in 1856, but which, after the appearance of the Sept. 1875 number, was incorporated with Beeton's BOY'S OWN MAGAZINE, already described.

Under the editorship of J. and M. Bennett, the BOYS AND GIRLS COMPANION FOR LEISURE HOURS was started in 1857, but after two years issue, the cumbersome title was changed for the COMPANION FOR YOUTH, yet even this alteration did not stay the hand of fate, and after 1860, it ceased to appear.

In 1858, nine numbers appeared, of the YOUTH'S INSTRUCTOR, an attempt apparently to revive the departed glories of the pioneer



magazine of that name. Twelve numbers appeared in 1857, of the BOYS OWN TIMES AND NEWS OF THE WORLD, the first boys newspaper ever published.

The following are a few journals which appeared during the twenty-year period with which we have been dealing, but which do not call for extended mention: The BOYS WONDER BOOK, edited by Dr. Primrose, six numbers, 1865-1866; BRITISH BOY, ten numbers, 1866-1867; BOYS PICTURE GALLERY, conducted by A. Ellison, 1872; LADS OF THE VILLAGE, edited by William Watkins, one volume, 1874; and BOYS ATHENEUM, two parts, 1875. (The end).

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### A COLLECTOR'S TRIUMPH.

by Fred T. Singleton.

It is front page news for readers of our magazine, that George Sahr, the Kenosha, Wisc., novel stacker, after a search of fifteen years, has finally landed the two missing numbers (2 and 3) for his set of the FRANK READE WEEKLY MAGAZINE. He now has the 96 numbers complete, and can, like Shorty, in the picture on the front page of Peter Pad's "Shorty, or, Kicked into Good Luck", put his thumb on his nose and wiggle his fingers "in the most comical way" at the rest of us.

Mr. Sahr is an enthusiastic Frank Reade fan, and began searching for stories about his famous hero, early in the second decade of the century, when you could still buy back numbers of the nickel libraries direct from the publishers. It was from the publishing house of Frank Tousey, before drastic paper restrictions of the big war began to knock the already crumbling foundations from under that concern, that Mr. Sahr bought all of the numbers of his Frank Reade series, except 1-2-3-4-9-10-11-37-95-and 96, which were



out of print. All of these missing numbers were finally run down and purchased except 2 and 3. Brotherhood members Cummings, Lee and McCarty helped out a lot.

But it was that fast-working new member--that big-scale collector--Charles Bragin, who located the two missing numbers and made it possible for Mr. Sah r to close the ranks tight in his line of this library. This transaction was carried out in a fine spirit of cooperation, and we congratulate both gentlemen.

The FRANK READE WEEKLY MAGAZINE was the fourth series of Frank Reade stories published by Frank Tousey, since the first, "The Steam Man" appeared in BOYS OF NEW YORK, 1876, considering as the first series, the early ones as they appeared as serials in that weekly.

Then in 1882, they began to be republished in the WIDE AWAKE LIBRARY--a famous black and white at the peak of its popularity in the late 1880's. After success for another decade, in the middle 1890's, just as their popularity began to wane, the invention stories were starred in a library series of their own, called the FRANK READE LIBRARY, a black and white. The third series ran to 191 numbers, until 1902, when the FRANK READE WEEKLY MAGAZINE with colored covers, made its appearance, going to ninety-six numbers.

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### THE CLAYTON CORRAL.

Well I've been spreading a wide loop to drag for information on the writers and illustrators of the CLAYTON GROUP of magazines.

Reckon we all agree that the covers of the dime and nickel libraries, both black and white, and colored, formed about 50% of their allure. Today, the fine covers of RANCH ROMANCES, are reproduced from oil paintings of Charles L. Wrenn who once delighted us with



covers for the old Buffalo Bill Stories-Diamond Dick, Jr.-Nick Carter Weekly-Rough Rider Weekly, etc. He has also gone in for some sculpture, making for instance, a fine model of a cowboy as fork a pitching bronc and another splendid model of a cow-hand bulldogging a steer. Both were done for Clayton Magazines.

Now, let me introduce one of the star writers for Ranch Romances, Rangoland Love Story Magazine, and Western Love Story. A lady this time-Myrtle Juliette Corey. You'll be interested to know that she is Mrs. W. Bert Foster. Our readers will never forget the late W. Bert Foster who gave us, among other fine Western short stories and complete novels, those wonderful serials about "Two-gun" Homer Stillson, published some time since in Ace-High Magazine. Mrs. Foster writes corking good stories regularly and she not only writes, but she rides with the best of them. She has topped off salty ones in the World Series Rodeo, held at Madison Square Garden every fall. I don't have to tell you that you've got to know how to stick in a saddle to ride in that annual contest. Hats off to Mrs. W. Bert Foster. Be sure not to miss any of her fine stories.

One of the big writing names in Ace High and Cowboy Stories, is that of Forbes Parkhill. He lives in Denver, and though he was never a cowhand, he knows where to find the "sons of rope and saddle" in his part of the country.

A real son of the cow country is Arthur Mitchell. He goes back to Colorado every summer to develop new covers illustrating the life of the west. See his work on Ace-High and Cowboy Stories Covers.

For down to earth real western, watch the Clayton Publications. THE CORRAL BOSS.